



UNITED STATES PATENT AND TRADEMARK OFFICE

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE
United States Patent and Trademark Office
Address: COMMISSIONER FOR PATENTS
P.O. Box 1450
Alexandria, Virginia 22313-1450
www.uspto.gov

APPLICATION NO.	FILING DATE	FIRST NAMED INVENTOR	ATTORNEY DOCKET NO.	CONFIRMATION NO.
09/394,745	09/15/1999	Dane K Fisher	38-21(15454)B	4816

7590 03/08/2006

MONSANTO COMPANY
LAWRENCE M LAVIN JR
800 N LINDBERGH BOULEVARD
MAILZONE N2NB
ST LOUIS, MO 63167

EXAMINER

KIM, YOUNG J

ART UNIT PAPER NUMBER

1637

DATE MAILED: 03/08/2006

Please find below and/or attached an Office communication concerning this application or proceeding.

Office Action Summary

Application No.

09/394,745

Applicant(s)

FISHER ET AL.

Examiner

Young J. Kim

Art Unit

1637

-- The MAILING DATE of this communication appears on the cover sheet with the correspondence address --
Period for Reply

A SHORTENED STATUTORY PERIOD FOR REPLY IS SET TO EXPIRE 3 MONTH(S) OR THIRTY (30) DAYS, WHICHEVER IS LONGER, FROM THE MAILING DATE OF THIS COMMUNICATION.

- Extensions of time may be available under the provisions of 37 CFR 1.136(a). In no event, however, may a reply be timely filed after SIX (6) MONTHS from the mailing date of this communication.
- If NO period for reply is specified above, the maximum statutory period will apply and will expire SIX (6) MONTHS from the mailing date of this communication.
- Failure to reply within the set or extended period for reply will, by statute, cause the application to become ABANDONED (35 U.S.C. § 133). Any reply received by the Office later than three months after the mailing date of this communication, even if timely filed, may reduce any earned patent term adjustment. See 37 CFR 1.704(b).

Status

- 1) ☒ Responsive to communication(s) filed on 23 January 2006.
- 2a) ☐ This action is **FINAL**. 2b) ☒ This action is non-final.
- 3) ☐ Since this application is in condition for allowance except for formal matters, prosecution as to the merits is closed in accordance with the practice under *Ex parte Quayle*, 1935 C.D. 11, 453 O.G. 213.

Disposition of Claims

- 4) ☒ Claim(s) 8-10 and 12-27 is/are pending in the application.
- 4a) Of the above claim(s) _____ is/are withdrawn from consideration.
- 5) ☐ Claim(s) _____ is/are allowed.
- 6) ☒ Claim(s) 8-10 and 12-27 is/are rejected.
- 7) ☐ Claim(s) _____ is/are objected to.
- 8) ☐ Claim(s) _____ are subject to restriction and/or election requirement.

Application Papers

- 9) ☐ The specification is objected to by the Examiner.
- 10) ☐ The drawing(s) filed on _____ is/are: a) ☐ accepted or b) ☐ objected to by the Examiner.
Applicant may not request that any objection to the drawing(s) be held in abeyance. See 37 CFR 1.85(a).
Replacement drawing sheet(s) including the correction is required if the drawing(s) is objected to. See 37 CFR 1.121(d).
- 11) ☐ The oath or declaration is objected to by the Examiner. Note the attached Office Action or form PTO-152.

Priority under 35 U.S.C. § 119

- 12) ☐ Acknowledgment is made of a claim for foreign priority under 35 U.S.C. § 119(a)-(d) or (f).
- a) ☐ All b) ☐ Some * c) ☐ None of:
1. ☐ Certified copies of the priority documents have been received.
 2. ☐ Certified copies of the priority documents have been received in Application No. _____.
 3. ☐ Copies of the certified copies of the priority documents have been received in this National Stage application from the International Bureau (PCT Rule 17.2(a)).

* See the attached detailed Office action for a list of the certified copies not received.

Attachment(s)

- | | |
|--|---|
| 1) <input type="checkbox"/> Notice of References Cited (PTO-892) | 4) <input type="checkbox"/> Interview Summary (PTO-413)
Paper No(s)/Mail Date. _____ |
| 2) <input type="checkbox"/> Notice of Draftsperson's Patent Drawing Review (PTO-948) | 5) <input type="checkbox"/> Notice of Informal Patent Application (PTO-152) |
| 3) <input type="checkbox"/> Information Disclosure Statement(s) (PTO-1449 or PTO/SB/08)
Paper No(s)/Mail Date _____ | 6) <input type="checkbox"/> Other: _____ |

DETAILED ACTION

Continued Examination Under 37 CFR 1.114

A request for continued examination under 37 CFR 1.114 was filed in this application after a decision by the Board of Patent Appeals and Interferences, but before the filing of a Notice of Appeal to the Court of Appeals for the Federal Circuit or the commencement of a civil action. Since this application is eligible for continued examination under 37 CFR 1.114 and the fee set forth in 37 CFR 1.17(e) has been timely paid, the appeal has been withdrawn pursuant to 37 CFR 1.114 and prosecution in this application has been reopened pursuant to 37 CFR 1.114. Applicant's submission filed on January 23, 2006 has been entered.

Preliminary Remark

Claims 1-7 and 11 have been canceled.

Claims 12-27 are new.

Claims 8-10 and 12-27 are under prosecution therefore.

Claim Rejections - 35 USC § 101

35 U.S.C. 101 reads as follows:

Whoever invents or discovers any new and useful process, machine, manufacture, or composition of matter, or any new and useful improvement thereof, may obtain a patent therefor, subject to the conditions and requirements of this title.

Claims 8-10 and 12-27 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 101 because the claimed invention lacks patentable utility.

Definitions: [from REVISED INTERIM UTILITY GUIDELINES TRAINING

MATERIALS; repeated from <http://www.uspto.gov/web/menu/utility.pdf>, also available on

MPEP 2107.01(I)(B)):

"Credible Utility" - Where an applicant has specifically asserted that an invention has a particular utility, that assertion cannot simply be dismissed by Office personnel as being "wrong". Rather, Office personnel must determine if the assertion of utility is credible (i.e., whether the assertion of utility is believable to a person of ordinary skill in the art based on the totality of evidence and reasoning provided). An assertion is credible unless (A) the logic underlying the assertion is seriously flawed, or (B) the facts upon which the assertion is based is inconsistent with the logic underlying the assertion. Credibility as used in this context refers to the reliability of the statement based on the logic and facts that are offered by the applicant to support the assertion of utility. A *credible* utility is assessed from the standpoint of whether a person of ordinary skill in the art would accept that the recited or disclosed invention is currently available for such use. For example, no perpetual motion machines would be considered to be currently available. However, nucleic acids could be used as probes, chromosome markers, or forensic or diagnostic markers. Therefore, the credibility of such an assertion would not be questioned, although such a use might fail the *specific* and *substantial* tests (see below).

"Specific Utility" - A utility that is *specific* to the subject matter claimed. This contrasts with a *general* utility that would be applicable to the broad class of the invention. For example, a claim to a polynucleotide whose use is disclosed simply as a "gene probe" or "chromosome marker" would not be considered to be *specific* in the absence of a disclosure of a specific DNA target. Similarly, a general statement of diagnostic utility, such as diagnosing an unspecified disease, would ordinarily be insufficient absent a disclosure of what condition can be diagnosed.

"Substantial utility" - a utility that defines a "real world" use. Utilities that require or constitute carrying out further research to identify or reasonably confirm a "real world" context of use are not substantial utilities. For example, both a therapeutic method of treating a known or newly discovered disease and an assay method for identifying compounds that themselves have a "substantial utility" define a "real world" context of use. An assay that measures the presence of a material which has a stated correlation to a predisposition to the onset of a particular disease condition would also define a "real world" context of use in identifying potential candidates for preventive measures or further monitoring. On the other hand, the following are examples of situations that require or constitute carrying out further research to identify or reasonably confirm a "real world" context of use and, therefore, do not define "substantial utilities":

- A. Basic research such as studying the properties of the claimed product itself or the mechanisms in which the material is involved.
- B. A method of treating an unspecified disease or condition. (Note, this is in contrast to the general rule that treatments of specific diseases or conditions meet the criteria of 35 U.S.C. § 101.)
- C. A Method of assaying for or identifying a material that itself has no "specific and/or substantial utility".
- D. A method of making a material that itself has no specific, substantial, and credible utility.

Art Unit: 1637

E. A claim to an intermediate product for use in making a final product that has no specific, substantial, and credible utility.

Note that "throw away" utilities do not meet the tests for a *specific* or *substantial* utility. For example, using transgenic mice as snake food is a utility that is neither specific (all mice could function as snake food) nor substantial (using a mouse costing tens of thousands of dollars to produce as snake food is not a "real world" context of use). Similarly, use of any protein as an animal food supplement or a shampoo ingredient are "throw away" utilities that would not pass muster as specific or substantial utilities under 35 U.S.C. § 101. This analysis should, of course, be tempered by consideration of the context and nature of the invention. For example, if a transgenic mouse was generated with the specific provision of an enhanced nutrient profile, and disclosed for use as an animal food, then the test for specific and substantial *asserted* utility would be considered to be met.

"Well established utility" - a specific, substantial, and credible utility which is well known, immediately apparent, or implied by the specification's disclosure of the properties of a material, alone or taken with the knowledge of one skilled in the art. "Well established utility" does not encompass any "throw away" utility that one can dream up for an invention or a nonspecific utility that would apply to virtually every member of a general class of materials, such as proteins or DNA. If this is the case, any product or apparatus, including perpetual motion machines, would have a "well established utility" as landfill, an amusement device, a toy, or a paper weight; any carbon containing molecule would have a "well established utility" as a fuel since it can be burned; any protein would have well established utility as a protein supplement for animal food. This is not the intention of the statute.

[See also the MPEP at §§ 2107 - 2107.02].

The claimed combination of nucleic acids comprised on a substrate or as a microarray is not supported by a substantial utility because the disclosed uses of the nucleic acids are generally applicable to any nucleic acid. The specification states that the nucleic acid of the microarray are ESTs (expressed sequence tags) which have been derived from LIB189 cDNA library, which was prepared from leaf tissue harvested at anthesis from field grown *Zea mays* genotype RX601 plants (pp. 33-39; see also pp. 92, lines 8-14), and thus useful for studying the genes that are agronomically significant (pp. 33, 1st paragraph and throughout), expression studies (pp. 43), detection of polymorphisms (pp. 45-49), and for numerous other generic genetic engineering usages.

Art Unit: 1637

There is no evidence that LIB189 is a subtractive cDNA library, wherein nucleic acid molecules from maize tissue other than leaf tissues, from developmental stages other than anthesis, and/or from *Zea mays* plants other than genotype RX601 is subtracted (removed) from the library.

In addition, there is no evidence that any of the nucleic acids comprised in the claimed microarray are expressed only at the time of “anthesis,” only in leaf tissue, or only in *Zea mays* plant having the RX601 genotype.

Hence, Applicants’ asserted utilities are considered to be non substantial because no substantial utility has been established for the claimed subject matter. For example, a microarray comprising ESTs could be used as a research tool and not substantial in its usage for a particular detection. Unless the array, or the probes fixed on the array (i.e., nucleic acids), are specific for a certain disease, condition, or certain agronomically significant traits, the nucleic acids are only useful for conducting further research to find a substantial utility. The need for such research clearly indicates that the nucleic acid is not disclosed as to a currently available or substantial utility. The research contemplated by applicant(s) to utilize the nucleic acids to conduct find agronomically advantageous traits, such as their biological activities, does not constitute a specific and substantial utility. Neither the specification as filed nor any art of record discloses or suggests any property or activity for the nucleic acids such that another non-asserted utility would be well established for the compounds.

The instant situation is analogous to that which was addressed in *Brenner v. Manson*, 148 USPQ 689 (1966), wherein the court expressed the opinion that all chemical compounds are “useful” to the chemical arts when this term is given its broadest interpretation. However, the court held that this broad interpretation was not the intended definition of “useful” as it appears in 35

Art Unit: 1637

U.S.C. 101, which requires that an invention must have either an **immediately apparent** or fully disclosed “real world” utility (emphasis added). The court held that:

“The basic quid pro quo contemplated by the Constitution and the Congress for granting a patent monopoly is the benefit derived by the public from an invention with substantial utility...[u]nless and until a process is refined and developed to this point-where specific benefit exists in currently available form there is insufficient justification for permitting an appellant to engross what may prove to be a broad field...a patent is not a hunting license...[i]t is **not a reward for the search**, but compensation for its **successful conclusion**. [emphasis added]

These microarray of the instant application fails to have this substantial utility because the probes on the microarray, by their presence or absence, do not provide a real-world applicability to one ordinarily skilled in the art.

The probes (which make up the microarray) as disclosed, do not provide to one of ordinary skill in the art, what their presence or the absence would be useful for. For a probe to have a **substantial or real-world** utility, its presence or absence must relay to the ordinarily skilled artisan a real-world applicable information, such as detection/predisposition of certain conditions (i.e., cancer markers) (emphasis added). A statement indicating that the array of probes has substantial utility because it can, detect polymorphisms would not give an **immediately apparent**, or substantial utility as court has expressed because such apparent utility would not be found without conducting **further research** on each of the claimed polymorphisms (emphasis added). The claimed microarray lacks a substantial utility because the specification of the instant application fails to provide any guidance that the presence/absence of the claimed nucleic acids correlate to some disease, condition, or presence of harmful agents (i.e., bacteria), etc. The instant application simply relies on the fact that the probes have been patentable in the art and since the claimed microarray comprises probes, it must be patentable. Such reasoning is flawed because nucleic acid probes are not patented

Art Unit: 1637

solely on their ability to hybridize to their complement. It is the information (a specific benefit, or an immediately applicable benefit) which is gleaned from the hybridization.

While it is true that a probe (which make up the array) would be found to have an immediately apparent utility, if, by its over-expression or under-expression, an artisan could derive a useful information (such as diagnostic for conditions). However, the instant specification fails to disclose any of such benefit. The artisan using the microarray of the instant application would not know why the artisan should use the microarray of the claimed probes over other microarray comprising different probes that are isolated from plants, (i.e., maize). Without conducting further research, the artisan would not have any reason, such as an immediately apparent benefit, to use the claimed microarray comprising the recited SEQ ID Numbers.

At best, Applicants have provided a microarray comprising probes isolated plants, wherein, each probe of the microarray would require further research to find its substantial utility. Such would not be demonstrative of a substantial utility for the claimed subject matter.

The U.S. Court of Appeals for the Federal Circuit recently addressed the utility requirement in the context of a claim to DNA. See In re Fisher, 421 F.3d 1356, 76 USPQ2d 1225 (Fed. Cir. 2005). The Fisher court interpreted the above-discussed Brenner v. Manson, 383 U.S. 519, 148 USPQ 689 (1966), as rejecting a “de minimis view of utility.” 421 F.3d at 1370, 76 USPQ2d at 1229. The Fisher court held that 101 requires a utility that is both substantial and specific. Id. At 1371, 76 USPQ2d at 1229. The court held that disclosing a substantial utility means “show[ing] that an invention is useful to the public as disclosed in its current form, not that it may be useful at some further date after further research.” Simply put, to satisfy the ‘substantial’ utility requirement, an asserted use must show that claimed invention has a significant and presently available benefit to the public.” Id., 76 USPQ2d at 1230.

Art Unit: 1637

The Fisher court held that none of the uses asserted by the applicant in that case were either substantial or specific. The uses were not substantial because “all of Fisher’s asserted uses represent merely hypothetical possibilities, objectives which the claimed ESTs, or any EST for that matter, could possibly achieve, but none for which they have been used in the real world.” Id. At 1373, 76 USPQ2d at 1231.

Accordingly, the claimed subject matter fails to satisfy the utility as required under 35 U.S.C. 101 for the above reasons.

Claim Rejections - 35 USC § 112

The following is a quotation of the first paragraph of 35 U.S.C. 112:

The specification shall contain a written description of the invention, and of the manner and process of making and using it, in such full, clear, concise, and exact terms as to enable any person skilled in the art to which it pertains, or with which it is most nearly connected, to make and use the same and shall set forth the best mode contemplated by the inventor of carrying out his invention.

Claims 8-10 and 12-27 are also rejected under 35 U.S.C. 112, first paragraph. Specifically, since the claimed invention is not supported by either a specific and substantial asserted utility or a well established utility for the reasons set forth above, one skilled in the art clearly would not know how to use the claimed invention.

Claims 8-10 and 12-27 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 112, first paragraph, as containing subject matter which was not described in the specification in such a way as to reasonably convey to one skilled in the relevant art that the inventor(s), at the time the application was filed, had possession of the claimed invention.

The specification discloses claimed SEQ ID Nos, which corresponds to the cDNA associated with plants (i.e., *Zea mays*). The claimed SEQ ID Numbers meet the written description

Art Unit: 1637

and enablement provisions of 35 USC 112, first paragraph. However, claims 8-10 and 12-27 recite nucleic acid comprising the claimed SEQ ID Numbers. Because it is not apparent from the specification that the claimed SEQ ID Numbers contain a full open reading frame, the claimed nucleic acids of SEQ ID Numbers read on cDNAs of full open reading frame. None of these sequences meet the written description provision of 35 USC 112, first paragraph. The specification provides insufficient written description to support the genus encompassed by the claim.

Vas-Cath Inc. v. Mahurkar, 19 USPQ2d 1111, makes clear that "applicant must convey with reasonable clarity to those skilled in the art that, as of the filing date sought, he or she was in possession of *the invention*. The invention is, for purposes of the 'written description' inquiry, *whatever is now claimed*." (See page 1117.) The specification does not "clearly allow persons of ordinary skill in the art to recognize that [he or she] invented what is claimed." (See Vas-Cath at page 1116.)

With the exception of recited SEQ ID Numbers, the skilled artisan cannot envision the detailed chemical structure of the encompassed polynucleotides, regardless of the complexity or simplicity of the method of isolation. Adequate written description requires more than a mere statement that it is part of the invention and reference to a potential method for isolating it. The nucleic acid itself is required. See Fiers v. Revel, 25 USPQ2d 1601, 1606 (CAFC 1993) and Amgen Inc. V. Chugai Pharmaceutical Co. Ltd., 18 USPQ2d 1016. In Fiddes v. Baird, 30 USPQ2d 1481, 1483, claims directed to mammalian FGF's were found unpatentable due to lack of written description for the broad class. The specification provided only the bovine sequence.

Finally, University of California v. Eli Lilly and Co., 43 USPQ2d 1398, 1404, 1405 held that:

...To fulfill the written description requirement, a patent specification must describe an invention and do so in sufficient detail that one skilled in the art can clearly conclude that "the inventor invented the claimed invention." *Lockwood v. American Airlines, Inc.*, 107

Art Unit: 1637

F.3d 1565, 1572, 41 USPQ2d 1961, 1966 (1997); *In re Gosteli*, 872 F.2d 1008, 1012, 10 USPQ2d 1614, 1618 (Fed. Cir. 1989) (" [T]he description must clearly allow persons of ordinary skill in the art to recognize that [the inventor] invented what is claimed."). Thus, an applicant complies with the written description requirement "by describing the invention, with all its claimed limitations, not that which makes it obvious," and by using "such descriptive means as words, structures, figures, diagrams, formulas, etc., that set forth the claimed invention." *Lockwood*, 107 F.3d at 1572, 41 USPQ2d at 1966.

An adequate written description of a DNA, such as the cDNA of the recombinant plasmids and microorganisms of the '525 patent, "requires a precise definition, such as by structure, formula, chemical name, or physical properties," not a mere wish or plan for obtaining the claimed chemical invention. *Fiers v. Revel*, 984 F.2d 1164, 1171, 25 USPQ2d 1601, 1606 (Fed. Cir. 1993). Accordingly, "an adequate written description of a DNA requires more than a mere statement that it is part of the invention and reference to a potential method for isolating it; what is required is a description of the DNA itself." *Id.* at 1170, 25 USPQ2d at 1606.

The name cDNA is not itself a written description of that DNA; it conveys no distinguishing information concerning its identity. While the example provides a process for obtaining human insulin-encoding cDNA, there is no further information in the patent pertaining to that cDNA's relevant structural or physical characteristics; in other words, it thus does not describe human insulin cDNA. Describing a method of preparing a cDNA or even describing the protein that the cDNA encodes, as the example does, does not necessarily describe the cDNA itself. No sequence information indicating which nucleotides constitute human cDNA appears in the patent, as appears for rat cDNA in Example 5 of the patent. Accordingly, the specification does not provide a written description of the invention of claim 5.

Therefore, only the recited SEQ ID Numbers but not the full breadth of the claim (or none of the sequences encompassed by the claim) meets the written description provision of 35 USC 112, first paragraph. The species specifically disclosed are not representative of the genus because the genus is highly variant. Applicant is reminded that Vas-Cath makes clear that the written description provision of 35 USC 112 is severable from its enablement provision. (See page 1115.)

Conclusion

No claims are allowed.

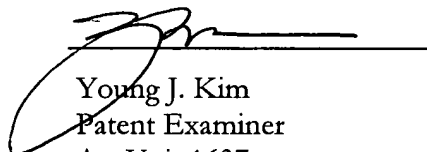
Art Unit: 1637

Inquiries

Any inquiry concerning this communication or earlier communications from the Examiner should be directed to Young J. Kim whose telephone number is (571) 272-0785. The Examiner is on flex-time schedule and can best be reached from 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. The Examiner can also be reached via e-mail to Young.Kim@uspto.gov. However, the office cannot guarantee security through the e-mail system nor should official papers be transmitted through this route.

If attempts to reach the Examiner by telephone are unsuccessful, the Examiner's supervisor, Dr. Gary Benzion, can be reached at (571) 272-0782.

Papers related to this application may be submitted to Art Unit 1637 by facsimile transmission. The faxing of such papers must conform with the notice published in the Official Gazette, 1156 OG 61 (November 16, 1993) and 1157 OG 94 (December 28, 1993) (see 37 CFR 1.6(d)). NOTE: If applicant does submit a paper by FAX, the original copy should be retained by applicant or applicant's representative. NO DUPLICATE COPIES SHOULD BE SUBMITTED, so as to avoid the processing of duplicate papers in the Office. All official documents must be sent to the Official Tech Center Fax number: (571) 273-8300. For Unofficial documents, faxes can be sent directly to the Examiner at (571) 273-0785. Any inquiry of a general nature or relating to the status of this application should be directed to the Group receptionist whose telephone number is (571) 272-1600.


Young J. Kim
Patent Examiner
Art Unit 1637
3/6/2006

**YOUNG J. KIM
PATENT EXAMINER**

yjk